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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	page 3
DAVID GASCOYNE: <i>Introducing Kenneth Patchen</i>	4
KENNETH PATCHEN: <i>A Statement by the Author</i>	10
<i>Three Early Poems</i>	11
<i>O Fiery River</i>	13
<i>Rest, Heart of the Tired World</i>	14
THOMAS GOOD: <i>Two French Poets</i>	15
MAX JACOB: <i>Nocturne</i>	18
<i>The Moist Earth</i>	19
PAUL ELUARD: <i>Love and Poetry</i>	20
JULES SUPERVIELLE: <i>Living</i>	21
PIERRE JEAN JOUVE: <i>The Mystic Epoch</i>	22
GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE	
<i>Last Stanzas from the Luckless Lover</i>	23
<i>The Future</i>	24
<i>Hunting Horn</i>	24
<i>Bonds</i>	25
ROLAND GANT	
<i>Notes on the Cinquantenaire of the Death of Verlaine</i>	26
MANUEL ALTOLAGUIRRE: <i>I and the Light</i>	28

ANTHERO DE QUENTAL: <i>Redemption</i>	page 28
PAUL POTTS: <i>The Poetry of Dylan Thomas</i>	29
ALEC KING: <i>Obscurity in Modern Poetry</i>	32
C. BUSBY SMITH: <i>Four Lenten Moods</i>	36
PAUL POTTS: <i>No Bread to Break</i>	37
William Butler Yeats, 1865-1939	38
FRED MARNAU: <i>Trellis of Roses</i>	38
JOHN BAYLISS: <i>Fahtepur Sikri</i>	39
HOWARD SERGEANT: <i>Lyric by the River</i>	39
ANTONY BORROW: <i>Betrayal</i>	40
Picaresque	41
Biography	41
JOHN SINGER: <i>Soft in These Evenings</i>	42
The Returning Always	42
A. WALTER MARSDEN: <i>Hemisphere</i>	44
DENISE LEVERTOFF: <i>Autumn Journey</i>	45
Regent Street	45
WALFORD MORGAN: <i>Soliloquy One</i>	46
AUDRIE RUSSELL: <i>The Pharisees</i>	47
ROLAND GANT: <i>Brother, Tall Brother</i>	48
ALAN ROOK: <i>Memory</i>	49
JULIAN ORDE: <i>The Use of Moths</i>	50
UNA MONK: <i>The Unaware</i>	50
REVIEWS	51

EDITORIAL

Now that we are really entering into the first year of peace and the secret of the atom bomb still remains in the hands of one nation (up to the time of writing), we may once more begin to enjoy a brief but perhaps fruitful period of literary fraternization between the peoples of the world who have till now been imprisoned behind the steel frontiers of war. Since the reopening of communications with Europe there has been a marked revival in interest in translations. We have always made it our ideal to take a balanced view of European culture, have felt that all the great languages should contribute their quota to the synthesis of Western civilization. Poetry is the language in which the unconscious aspirations of the minds of the peoples realize themselves, become evident and concrete. They are trying to know each other, to establish some real contact over the artificial frontiers of the geographers and the trade experts, the bankers and the politicians. It is easier to find a unity among poets of many languages than among the politicians who attempt to cloak their utter lack of realism in syllables of three letters.

We have always welcomed American contributors to the pages of POETRY QUARTERLY. In this number we print some specimens of the work of Kenneth Patchen, one of the most remarkable of young American poets who has been appearing in one or two little magazines in this country, but is not known even to the general verse-reading public. We include also a varied selection of translations from some of the best contemporary French poets whose names were well known before the war and who have carried on the great tradition of French poetry, who have proved so undeniably that *la verbe C'est Dieu* and indeed eternal. Also appear translations from the German, Spanish and Portuguese, and it is our intention to show that all these poems, together with the work of our usual contributors who have also come to fruition in spite of difficulty and danger, make up a whole, a unity of the spirit which is the only hope of a battered and broken world. We have survived but shall continue only if our starvation and stagnation is not of the mind.

INTRODUCING KENNETH PATCHEN

On the dust-jacket of 'Cloth of the Tempest' is printed the following brief biographical summary:

'Born in Ohio in 1911, Patchen speaks for the generation whose destiny has been to grow up during one war and to go through another. He attended the Experimental College of the University of Wisconsin; was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1936; was one of three new poets to be added to Louis Untermeyer's revised *Modern American Poetry*; is married to Miriam Oikemus; and lives for the most part in New York.

The first collection of Kenneth Patchen's poems to be published was called 'Before the Brave'. I have never had an opportunity of seeing this book, but I understand that the author does not regard it as representing anything but a preliminary and not mature stage of his development. It was followed in 1939 by 'First Will & Testament', 'like no book that has been published in these States', as the anthologist Untermeyer called it. The unusually strong, indeed violent, if not exactly distinct, personality emanating from each of its 180 pages, made its appearance a memorable event in modern American letters.

In 1942 Patchen consolidated the achievement of his second book with the publication of 'The Dark Kingdom', of which the complete title, occupying the entire front page of the book, runs as follows:

"The Dark Kingdom" stands above the waters as a sentinel warning man of dangers from his own kind. On its altars the deeds of blood are not offered; here are watchers whose eyes are fixed on the eternal undertakings of the spirit. What has been common and tarnished in these poor wombs, here partakes of immortality. In its windows are reflected the unreturning events of childhood. All who ask life, find a peace everlasting in its radiant halls. All who have opposed in secret, are here provided with green crowns. All who have been dragged through the cowed flame of this world, are here clothed in the bright garment of the tempest. Here all who sorrow and are weary under strange burdens—fearing death, are seen to enter the white throne room of God.

This book causes a *New York Times* critic to refer to Patchen as 'one of the poets whom historians will turn to for intelligence about the year 1942. He is the most impulsively romantic and imaginative of the younger writers.

Since then Patchen has published two further collections, the

important 'Cloth of the Tempest', in 1943, and a little earlier than this a small volume in the 'New Directions' 'Poet of the Month' series, containing twenty-one poems, and entitled 'The Teeth of the Lion', with the following corollary to the title:

'In white savage caps make a bloody pasturage where I am
laid down break tear kill in a world of cheats defilers ratsinpink-
walls through the black camps where murder lifts its teaching
but the girls by the lake and the green quick laughing kids in the
school-yard and the sad wise beautiful gentle clean strong good
loving joys as I am made and you will know me.

On the dust-jacket of 'Cloth of the Tempest' from which I have already quoted, after giving extracts from the entire American Press referring to Patchen in the most laudatory terms, his publishers assert on the back flap: 'This record of critical praise and acknowledgment 'speaks for itself as strongly as Patchen speaks for America', and conclude by referring to him finally as 'a modern of . . . tremendous importance.' Opening the book at random, a conservative reader, duly impressed by this evidence of the apparent acceptance by common critical consent of Patchen as an American poet of serious significance, may perhaps find himself bewildered, baffled, even outraged, to come upon the sort of thing of which 'Loves of the Tragic Owl', for instance, will serve as a fair example:

'Zeeeeen—Stilgrind twing flick. Bleeooook——

Rattlesoft mouth——

Lusssssssssss lornhen——

Tubititititit (bloody grass) ferngrim

As an old man's brain——

Sedghart ice-clothed in gray fur——

Turning the pages in search of further enlightenment, such a reader might well begin to suspect that someone's leg was being pulled somewhere on coming across pages on which crude grotesque drawings, scraps of cuttings from newspapers and encyclopædias are combined with provocative phrases printed mixed up with the rest in a dramatic lay-out (Patchen calls these *divertissements* 'makings'), or a childish outline drawing with the caption, 'Ragamuffin Playing With a Really Pretty Creature While His Poor Mother Roams Through the City Looking for Work.'

If this 'conservative' peruser happened to be one whose conservatism was simply the rationalization of his lack of intelligence or adventuresomeness or curiosity, as is occasionally the case with

hypothetical readers flaunting this description, it would probably be simply a waste of his time and my own for me to attempt to mollify him with any sort of argument or explanation. But if, however, he should be a conservative whose mind were not quite closed to all reasonable persuasion, and always supposing that, as I believe, it is in fact possible, notwithstanding the apparently wilful irresponsibility of antics such as I have just indicated, to make out a case for recognizing Patchen as a writer deserving the serious attention of anyone interested in the authentic poetic utterance of our time—and if it really were necessary to attempt some ‘explanation’ or ‘justification’ of the sometimes freakish results of Patchen’s *iconoclasm* (to call it that), then the clearest way of doing so, it seems to me, would be by referring first to the odd phenomenon known as DADA, and then showing how Patchen’s significance can perhaps best be seen in the light of that particular context.

To put it plainly: Kenneth Patchen is the lone one-man DADA of contemporary America.

The true significance, the unique historical importance of the non-movement (or anti-movement) known as DADA, born during and out of the First World War, has never as far as I know been adequately stated (that is, by any writer in English, at least; Georges Hugnet’s comprehensive account published serially in ‘Cahiers d’Art’ may be presumed to do it justice in French; it was, of course, in any case, pre-eminently a French phenomenon). Though this is hardly the place for me to start trying to make good this deficiency, the meaning of DADA might very briefly be outlined as follows:

As a moment of universal intellectual and moral degradation, when the values on which Western civilization is supposed to be based were every day being spectacularly compromised by most of the official spokesmen of society, DADA was perhaps the sole visible sign indicating the existence of at least a tiny remnant among the living who were still determined not to participate in this general passive surrender of spiritual integrity, not to accept the terms of its betrayal. If this refusal expressed itself only indirectly, as from behind a mask, this was not on account of any prudent deference to civil authority, but because of the determining part that *irony* played in its expression. The mask assumed by DADA in face of the hypocritical official bluff of the *soi-disant* Christian world was that of a ferocious humour (UMOR as Jacques Vaché nicknamed it), the convulsive grimace of frantic Absurdity. In a society organized solely for purposes of competitive commerce, the exploitation of subject races and the destruction (whenever necessary, and then

with as thorough an efficiency as possible) of landscapes, armies, cities and even civil populations, yet in which that society's official representatives scarcely ever referred directly to the existence of these universally evident evils, though having the words *duty*, *self-sacrifice*, *heroism*, *the good of mankind*, *Christian civilization*, and so on constantly on their lips—in such a society, DADA's grimace implied, it is impossible to take anything seriously any more; all that is put forward as claiming reverence, respect or honour turns out to be hollow appearance concealing some ugly lie, so that none of the great abstractions by which we are supposed to order and justify our lives any longer make sense: What other honest and sincere expression can we give to our reaction to such a situation than a burst of furious, incoherent laughter? You have to laugh, since to weep is too embarrassing, and even sorrow is a 'noble' emotion that one has therefore had to learn to distrust at last. . . .

Most of those who actively participated in DADA were either writers or painters; which amounted to saying that nothing could be calculated to arouse their disgusted derision more effectively than literature and art. The 'Mona Lisa', for instance, was eminently suitable, they considered, for painting moustaches on; Rodin's 'Le Penseur' made an excellent trade mark for a patent laxative; if a poem was to be expected of one, a page or two from the telephone directory would always serve. The Art of Letters, to a dadaist, meant no more than a random item in a catalogue, including poultry farming, semantics, ludo, phrenology and colonic irrigation.

If, as Vaché wrote to André Breton in 1917, 'it's necessary to disgorge a little acid or old lyricism, let it be done abruptly, rapidly. . . .' And: 'ART, of course, doesn't exist—so it's futile to go into a song and dance about it. . . . So we neither like Art nor Artists (down with Apollinaire and HOW RIGHT TOGRATH IS TO ASSASSINATE THE POET).'

The review which eventually became the 'organ' of most of the dadaists after the defeat of DADA—that is to say, after they had realized that 'DADA could only continue by ceasing to exist'—had a title which seems plain and straightforward enough at first sight, but which actually was fraught with complex implication. It was called simply 'Littérature'. For the contributors to this review, 'literature' was no more than a term of contemptuous ridicule; it was adopted as a label out of a sort of wry self-deprecation, rather as a collegiate 'mag.' might style itself 'The Tripe-Hound', and in much the same spirit as that which led Eric Satie to label a really

unexceptionally serious group of piano studies, 'Dried-up Embryos'. This self-deprecation and defensive sarcasm was due to it being only as it were shamefacedly, as a result of an absurd, all-too-human feebleness of mind, that these writers wrote at all. The soundest justification of the habit that they could find was that of Knut Hamsun, quoted by André Breton: 'I write to pass the time'.

The close similarity between the dadaist attitude to literature and the attitude of Kenneth Patchen is so obvious, I think, from the following passages, that I need but quote them to dispense with further commentary:

*'And in particular ask me to tell you
What I think of the present state of our American Letters
As I think
It stink—
Together with the drippy jerks who commit it.*

(*'The Impuissant Surrender to the Name and
the Act and the Tension of Ratheda.'*)

'It is an absolute mistake to ladle out stress like a cook measuring off the ingredients for a cake. We've got a country full of cake-baking poets now, one just as good and just as bad as the next. . . . Poetry is writing. Maybe what I am talking about is not poetry (the stuff the critics are yammering about). . . . I am a writer and I shall write. The term "poet" is a convenience of the middle-class. I declare myself a writer. I want room to move around. Spare me from the pawings-over of the cake-bakers.' (Preface to 'The Hunted City'.)

'It is more than unusual to write about anything now. Hours of each day I pass in the work of perfecting a little racket which is designed to interest spinsters and schoolmarms of either sex. To-morrow I have an appointment to visit a certain well-known poet whose work is done altogether under the influence of large cheques from his mama who never quite went to bed with him. All his poems begin with x. ('I Never Had Any Desire So Strong. . .')

Just as DADA expressed itself through a mask of absurdity, the adoption of which was determined by the irony inherent in the dadaist attitude, Kenneth Patchen, we find, has evolved in his more recent work a sort of *dramatic convention* for the expression of his attitude, which more or less amounts to a *persona*. The convention might tentatively be formulated somewhat like this: The poet, hypersensitive representative of humanity's loftiest ideals, is so appalled by the brutal realities of the contemporary scene that finally he has been driven literally out of his mind by the sheer

horror of it all. And in his derangement, wandering bemusedly about the Bedlam of New York, from time to time he gives vent to poignantly incoherent fragmentary utterance . . . delirious . . . outpourings in which, among much that is strictly meaningless, there nevertheless shine forth now and then the cold hard gleams of a kind of truth which a merely sane writer would never have the face to articulate except in a very much more roundabout, watered-down way. For instance, in a poem rather significantly entitled 'None Stay the White Speech of His Wandering', after a couple of stanzas of unadulterated dementia, he suddenly hits out with:

*'Death, Because when you are very naked
You cannot clothe yourself with the partydress
Of state or church or opinion or of being
An article of merchandise on a country's
Bloodlist. You will confine yourself to the Kingdom.*

As another example, here is the end of a poem called 'The Temple of Diana':

*'I am too angry to bother with this poem
About the beauty of the world
Who cares a damn about that now.*

Or again, here is a small piece of truth about the life of Man as it is lived in America every day at this time:

*'Rain dripping down from a rusty eavespout
Into the gray-fat cinders of the millyard . . .
The dayshift goes on in four minutes.*

The Kingdom to which the demented poet of Patchen's dramatic convention is said to confine himself is nothing more nor less than the domain of the solitary individual's irreducible integrity: the expression *son fort interieur* describes it exactly. It is that unique corner of subjective chaos which has been colonized by his creative imagination, as Blake colonized Jerusalem, not as a sensitive dreamer's cosy hide-out against the hostility of the kingdom, forever inescapable after all, of mundane reality, but in very earnest as a guilt-determined *symptomatic reflection* counterbalancing our unpleasant 'real world' and standing as in a certain sense an indictment of it. Just as the enraged burlesque of DADA really constituted an indictment of the 'universal intellectual and moral degradation' that called it forth as a protest, at the time of the First World War. Time since then has lurched uncontrollably on, carrying all dadaists well into their middle-age; André Breton, in 1942, was reproaching

himself that he still had 'an eye for the sad recantations' of Louis Aragon, author in his youth of one of the most notorious of dadaist poems (called 'Suicide' and consisting simply of the letters of the alphabet), who had then recently been describing himself as 'looking very respectable indeed with all my decorations and my hair whitened by age', and Breton a year or two later was himself to be found at least sufficiently respectable to be invited to deliver an official address to the Year's Leaving Class at Yale. The coming of the Second World War can hardly be said to have brought with it a very marked improvement on the intellectual and moral condition that I have described as being universal at the time of its predecessor. But if its coming found the first dadaists settling down to middle-age, it could discover no alteration in the pure intransigence of the original DADA spirit, for that is something that cannot be tied down by dates. In the poetry, or whatever you like to call it, of Kenneth Patchen, it is to be found flaring as wantonly and gratuitously as ever.

DAVID GASCOYNE

A STATEMENT BY THE AUTHOR

Putting aside whatever disagreement I may have with Mr. Gascoyne's interpretation of DADA, I am at a complete loss to see what his essay on this movement has to do with my work.

Mr. Gascoyne quotes from certain of my poems to substantiate his thesis; were there space, I can think of no better refutation than to reproduce these same fragments here—especially since it should be obvious even to that 'conservative peruser' that satire is often best served by a satiric approach.

'What other honest and sincere expression', asks Mr. Gascoyne—stating the DADA position—'can we give to our reaction to such a situation (the hypocrisy and vulgar falsehoods of society) than a burst of furious, incoherent laughter?' Oh, but there are a lot of others! As poets we can reassert our belief in the essential nobility of human beings, our love of and humility before the art of poetry itself—for without these we are not poets at all . . . we can weep, and our tears will not be those of spoiled children but of men who have serious lives in this world of horror and wonder . . . we can kneel, because the Beautiful is kneeling beside us, and the Mystery is watching us with its eyes that are the cold flowers of the sky.

KENNETH PATCHEN

January, 1946 (New York).

KENNETH PATCHEN

THREE EARLY POEMS

(1) *The Sea has Caves and Urns*

The sea unlocks a child's castle and an angel's
Eye: my father's blood runs through the whale . . .
 here where an infinity of hands
 pursues a stumbling, shoreless world . . .
The footless worm remarks of hill and sound
Where waves convince the pilgrim's feet
 that there awaits
 the final, monstrous sleep.
My father's bones are of continents made . . .

(2) *Geography of Music*

Let me be prodigal as sun in praising you.
I take the peeping angel, frolicking
 in the branches of Time;
The dreamless churchyard on the wings
Of this Gypsy-moth; the face
Within the river's mist; the footsteps
Of this throbbing flower; water's rapture, leaf's
Melody in delirium of sunrise—
I take these things as factions
 in the spirit's lens
Through which I look at you. And yet,
 how can
I trust to word's furniture in moving now
Within the swarm of mountain worlds
Your lightest touch has built for me?
It is the ocean's sound of sorrowing,
It is the wonder of a thousand singing,
It is the world with all loveliness
Lost within the moons and suns of it,
Beloved, that you are.

(3) At the New Year

In the shape of this night, in the still fall
 of snow, Father
In all that is cold and tiny, these little birds
 and children
In everything that moves to-night, the trolleys
 and the lovers, Father
In the great hush of country, in the ugly noise
 of our cities
In this deep throw of stars, in those trenches
 where the dead are, Father
In all the wide land waiting, and in the liners
 out on the black water
In all that has been said bravely, in all that is
 mean anywhere in the world, Father
In all that is good and lovely, in every house
 where sham and hatred are
In the name of those who wait, in the sound
 of angry voices, Father
Before the bells ring, before this little point in time
 has rushed us on
Before this clean moment has gone, before this night
 turns to face to-morrow, Father
There is this high singing in the air
Forever this sorrowful human face in eternity's window
And there are other bells that we would ring, Father
Other bells that we would ring.

'O Fiery River'

O fiery river
Flow out over the land.
Men have destroyed the roads of wonder,
And their cities squat like black toads
In the orchards of life.

Nothing is clean, or real, or as a girl,
Naked to love, or to be a man with.
The arts of this American land
Stink in the air of mountains;
What has made these men sick rats
That they find out every cheap hole?
How can these squeak of greatness?
Push your drugstore-culture into the sewer
With the rest of your creation.
The bell wasn't meant to toll for you.
Keep your filthy little hands off it.

O fiery river
Spread over this American land.
Drown out the falsity, the smug contempt
For what does not pay . . .
What would you pay Christ to die again?

'Rest, Heart of the Tired World'

Rest, heart of the tired world.
Hush . . . go to sleep.
Men and cities keep their cold terrible watches,
And the ocean frets at these naked lands of pain.
O hushabye . . . and go to sleep.

This red rain . . .
To breathe . . .
To weep . . .
To love where only murder has been lain . . .
To find youth, and faith, and all their quick kin,
Buried deep in talking halls of horror . . .
No.
It is that we cannot see,
That we cannot hear,
That we cannot smell,
Or taste, or feel, or think;
For surely no will in heaven or earth
Could endure what we seem to possess:

We live in the shadow of a greater shadow——
But there is the sun!
And from him man shall have life,
And he shall have redress from the crimes
Of his most brutal habitation . . .

O rest, heart of the tired world.
Hush . . . and go to sleep.
There is a beautiful work for all men to do,
And we shall at last wake into the sun.

TWO FRENCH POETS

Can I think about poetry when my brother from Brittany is in prison?" exclaimed Max Jacob in one of the clandestine reviews of the Nazi occupation, only to die himself from the ill-effects of life in a concentration camp. And whilst such a death inevitably calls for indignation, by some tragic paradox, it takes on, in view of the poet's life, which at some stages was a martyrdom, a peculiar appropriateness. 'Saint Max Jacob! And why not?' is the invocation of one of his colleagues and admirers. This bizarre and frenzied pioneer of contemporary French poetry and painting, who on his own confession cried out for the moon, born a Jew, tormented by religious scruples and self-distrust in his youth, to the point of anguish, saw in 1909 a vision of the Holy Face on the walls of his Paris attic. Then followed his instruction in the Catholic religion and his reception into the Church. With Alfred Jarry and Guillaume Apollinaire he was a contributor to the early *avante-garde* review 'Le Festin d'Europe', and even after his conversion was among the most convivial spirits in the *quartier latin*, reading his poems to Picasso and their friends in the small hours of the morning, and playing a rôle, only second to that of Apollinaire, as a lively apologist of experimental writing. Later he retired to a monastery near Orléans where he continued his alarmingly prodigious output of verse and anecdote, whose main notes are an irony and inconsequence, which never descending to the grotesque or puerile, on closer familiarity reveal a rich humanity. Max, indeed, balancing himself, defiantly and with enviable equilibrium on Jacob's ladder, was far too in earnest to take life seriously, and if the mould and flavour of French poetry has in the meantime undergone an inevitable transformation, as though the backcloth of his dazzling *mis-en-scène* had suddenly been flung aside to reveal an oppressive landscape of mist and swamp, his infectious qualities will long continue to stimulate his disciples and admirers.

In June, 1941, Max Jacob met one of these disciples, whose father at dinner suddenly turned to ask the poet, 'What is lyrical poetry?' Next day Max bought an exercise book and compiled the *Conseils*.^{*} The same disciple, overjoyed at such solicitude, asked the poet to give a definition of the word 'sentiment'! Max took the exercise book and added, for his friend's benefit, a supplementary section of advice to a young student. The *Conseils* take the form of independent aphorisms and observations, betraying the author's wit

^{*} MAX JACOB, *Conseils a un Jeune Poète* (Gallimard, 50 frs.).

and the fruits of his experience. 'Even', he says, 'if you retort "Physician, heal thyself", and I have been unable to profit by my experience, this is no reason for closing the gate upon it to others.'

This is indeed a generous book, complete evidence that whatever rôle the poet played in his Christian irresponsibility he was supported by severe inner discipline and an estimable sense of self-dedication. There will be those who violently oppose his austerity, the insistence on attention to the lives of the saints, a morale which enjoins abstention from the cinema and dining in town, the cultivation of the virtues and the practice of religious meditation. There will be those who, since their personal conception of the aim of poetry is diametrically divergent, will dismiss most of the advice as pointless. The relation of art and religion has been industriously clarified by Jacques Maritain in his 'Art and Scholasticism', and the relevant problems cannot be entered upon here. Suffice it to say that Gide, quoted by Cocteau, remarked upon the part of God in the creative act, and that Max Jacob, whilst insisting that he extends his lucid advice with the idea of making his disciple a man, not a mystic, affirms constantly the same principle. This emphasis upon the spiritual origin of poetry appears salutary not only as redeeming the notion of poetry from that of a sort of occupational therapy for social misfits or as mass-magic to assist the inauguration of the Golden Age but as an autonomous activity in relation to the rest of man's pursuits. Unlike Rilke, Max Jacob does not decry the study of criticism. Read it, is his counsel, and criticize the critics. In the domain of æsthetic he re-echoes his contention, expressed in the preface to 'Le Cornet à Dés,' that artistic emotion ceases where analysis and thought intervene, that the artistic activity is an externalization of emotion. As for style, this is only differentiated by the composition of the whole, and not by the individual language of the writer. It is unfortunately hardly practicable to recommend this lively book, as the tiny circulation of literary matter from abroad is still a source of irritation. Manuals cannot make a poet, but there is sufficient data here from a most scrupulous pen to afford more than one evening's encouragement and enlightenment to the bewildered tyro, the industrious craftsmen, or even the avid controversialist.

A confederate of the same epoch, who renounced his surrealist affinities for the contemplative life, despite his defence of introversion as the essential attitude for the poet, it is 'not, not certainly, the obscure reveries of the inward gaze' which make the stuff of

Pierre Reverdy's substantial collection.* For those who are not acquainted with Reverdy, these poems may be described as very simple exercises of a primarily suggestive sensibility, lacking for the most part any consistent intrusion of personal comment and almost homogeneous in mood. Less eclectic than the frequently hallucinated constructions of Jacob, their English parallel would be T. E. Hulme, though here and there they trespass beyond that specialized vision of the actual upon which that exponent of modern verse so dogmatically insisted. So, in a fairly early poem, we have:

*'C'est un homme sans pieds qui voudrait courir
Une femme sans tête qui voudrait parler
Un enfant qui n'a guère que ses yeux pour pleurer.'*

(*'Ruine Achevée'*)

and though such evocations are rare in this volume, they are no doubt anticipatory, not only of the events, but also of the revolutionary diction of the poets during the occupation. Generally the appeal of these poems is the liberty accorded to familiar objects to speak and act for themselves, achieved by an extremely sincere depuration of emotional prejudice, the same element of surrender so finely evinced by Eluard. Such verse involves an almost complete absence of décor or of conventional organization. Its weakness lies in the risk to which it occasionally succumbs of becoming impoverished by its purity, its strength lies in the liberal margin it affords, given the necessary concentration, to the reader's own fancy. In other words, as often in a poem of Paul Valéry's, the essence lies between the lines. The title in fact of one of the poems, *'Plus que son Ombre'*, signifies precisely both the aim and the achievement. The trend, however, whilst it is fortunate and often successful in opening the way to a new universalism, is towards monotony, which certainly is not among the more versatile Jacob's foibles. A slender sample will serve to illustrate the respective approaches:

'La Loire est l'éternel emblème des durs travaux d'Adam.'

(Max Jacob)

'Les mots qu'on dit derrière le volet sont une menace.'

(Reverdy)

The tempo throughout the collection, and without exception, is that of the solitary:

*'Entre la maison et le ciel
Tout se gonfle
Car le vent souffle'*

* PIERRE REVERDY, *Plupart du Temps* (poèmes 1915-1922) (Gallimard, 270 frs.).

in search of that universal communion which links the poet with the mystic. And in spite of the inevitable restriction of such an attitude, a plasticity both frigid and imageless, the sum effect of each poem is that it attains a metaphysical serenity which is very nearly unique. A personal selection of the most pleasing of the poems would include 'Les Vides du Printemps', 'Passage Clandestine,' 'La Realité Immobile,' and 'Paris Prêvu.'

The prose poems have the same anonymity and suggestiveness as the verse, but unlike the latter, they sometimes work up to a climax. They give, on reading, the impression that here are many illuminating passages, which might have been developed to more purpose in a sustained serial work. They possibly conform to the canons of that difficult genre as outlined by Max Jacob in the preface to 'Le Cornet', but they defy any but the somewhat vertiginous attention of a tired appetite, like the scripts of Picasso. Yet not a few, for example, 'Voyages trop Grands', are as arresting as the void streets of Chirico. Poetry in France appears to be moving, as elsewhere from these half-lights, but none the less, both the poets discussed here have shown a new way, and one different from the Surrealists, towards other modes of perception, and their laboratory work has not been without extensive results.

THOMAS GOOD

MAX JACOB

Nocturne

Enter goddess in our barn
Contemplate triumphant corn
And never dare to intrude
Upon the farmers' sleep.

And low the flowers speak to the earth
And for the dead the moon replies
Revealing with her light
These four houses and two trees.

I hear humming near the nudes
A dream transformed to song
A woman—oh! completely nude
In the barn as on the balcony.

Serpents sleep in my initials
Animals in concert cease
Each blade of grass was a piece of folly
Trees from the base ignore their beauty.

(Translated by THOMAS GOOD)

The Moist Earth

In the green mists of dawn
Ah, everything happy is hidden
And everything unhappy too,
In the mists of the night
The rose never fades
As the dog wearily yawns
There are as many birds as leaves in the forest.

At night when I think of poetry
I cannot, no I cannot sleep,
Moisture of dawn;
Words, do not squander them
You will find them in the street
On the way to your friends.

PAUL ELUARD

Love and Poetry

Two Poems

Love as a token of my desire
Put lips to the sky of your words like a star
Set kisses upon the living night
And with the wake of embracing arms
Brand me as if with conquering fire
My dreams lie open to the world
Incorporeal and clear.

And when you are no longer there
I dream and sleep within a dream.

.

With a brow of glass which grief's night-watchmen wear
I passed beyond the darkness of the sky
while tiny plains with listless twin horizons
lay limp in either of my open hands
With a brow of glass which grief's night-watchmen wear
I searched for you this side of expectation
I wandered searching for you in myself
Now I no longer know how much I love you
Nor which of us it is that now is lost.

The Teeming Eyes

No one can know me
As you know me

Your eyes whose sleep
We share together
Bring me a far more lovely fate
Than all the night-times of the world

Your eyes which are my traveller's map
Give to the road's small incidents
No meaning that the earth can know

And those who mirror in your eyes
Our endless solitude are changed
From what they think themselves to be

No one can know you
Better than I.

JULES SUPERVIELLE

Living

Because my step has sought
To sound the depths of night
I find myself ensnared
Within this starry net.

The rest which others know
I turn from and ignore;
My very hours of sleep
The darkened sky devours.

The daylight's naked flesh
Is racked and crucified.
Birds in the wood's warm air
Change suddenly to ice,

And tumble from the trees.

PIERRE JEAN JOUVE

The Mystic Epoch

Great house with drawbridge
And reception-hall
And walls reared up from massive piles of stone
In you the traveller must suffer pain

Your walls are hung with implements of torture
And heavy ropes lie waiting in your vaults
Here will the traveller see the darkened stairway
Climbing from infinite to infinite
Regret for love toils up the steps of stone
Regret ascends and is not lost to sight

Having lived long in passage-ways of night
The tortured being trembles
Having long lost the day-time's airy light
He now forsakes those inward-shining suns

And long since lost
He passes flight after flight
He knows the windings by the statued creek
Places of death and pleasing labyrinths
And many a terrace and sad blind-alley-way
And pacing here beneath his persecution
The traveller seems to breathe a purer day

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE

Last Stanzas from the Luckless Lover

June the warm music of your sun
Scorches my tender finger-tips
In sad but sweet delirium
I walk through Paris with wandering steps
Without the heart for death to come

Endless is every Sabbath hour
The common barrel-organ's wheeze
Lamenting makes the courtyards sour
Flowers from the Paris balconies
Lean over like the leaning tower

Evenings in Paris drunk with gin
Aflame with electricity
The climbing tram that flashes green
Upon the wires with pole and trolley
Plays music of the wild machine

The cafés thick with smoke and haze
Cry out with all their gipsy vows
With icy siphons' cold displays
With waiters dressed in cotton-drawers
To you I loved so many days

I have known minstrelsy for queens
And elegies for all my years
The captive bondman's wall-bound hymn
Tunes of a lover choked with tears
And sweet songs that the sirens sing.

The Future

Shake up the straw
Stare out at the snow
Write your letters
Wait for the word

Puff at your pipe
In a dream of love
The flower-basket's ready
Look at the rose

War has not dried the fountain
Nor tarnished the golden straw
Observe the bee in its flying
And shun all future thoughts

Look at these hands
For they are one
With snow bee and rose
As with time-to-come.

(Translated from the French
by DEREK STANFORD)

Hunting Horn

Our history is noble and tragic
Like the death-mask of a tyrant
And no drama of chance or magic
Nor anything indifferent
Makes our love pathetic.

And Thomas de Quincey drinking
Opium a chaste and gentle poison
Goes to his poor Anne thinking
Let us go on go on as everything passes on
And I will look back often

For memory is a horn for hunting
Whose sound is lost between the winds and is gone.

Bonds

Ropes that are made of cries

Clamours of bells across Europe
Lynched centuries

And lines which throttle nations
There are but two two or three men of us
Free from all fetters
Give us your hand

Violent rain that combs the chimneys
Ropes

Woven ropes and
Undersea cables
Towers of Babel changed into bridges
Pontifical webs
And all lovers bound by a single bond

Other threads more tenuous
White rays of light
Cords and Concord

I write only to praise you
O threads dear threads of sense
Enemies of dreams
Enemies of desire

Enemies of regret
Enemies of tears
Enemies of all that I hold most dear

(Translated from the French by WALFORD MORGAN)

NOTES ON THE CINQUANTENAIRE OF THE DEATH OF VERLAINE

It is scarcely possible to add anything to all that has been conjectured and written about Paul Verlaine since his death in 1896. Catholics and intellectual atheists alike have advanced theories by which they hoped to lay claim to his soul. The history of his alcoholic and erotic adventures has been sifted and shredded by psychologists in order to prove or disprove the allegations concerning the nature of his relationship with Rimbaud since the first suggestion at the Brussels trial in 1873. So through the years a great mass of 'research' has arisen and obscured that part of the man which is important to us, i.e. Verlaine the poet.

When Edmund Gosse met him for the first time in Paris in 1893 he recounted with some surprise that 'I had been prepared for strange eccentricities of garb, but he was very decently dressed', in what Verlaine himself referred to as his 'chemise de conférence'. Gosse appeared to be very impressed by the poet's recitation of 'Clair de Lune' and 'Mon Dieu m'a dit'. When they met again in London a year later Gosse called him a Chinese philosopher and gained the retort 'Chinois—comme vous voulez, mais philosophe—non pas!' And philosopher he never was, but merely a poet—a being who drifted with life:

*Et je m'en vais
Au vent mauvais
Qui m'emporte
Deçà, delà
Pareil à la
Feuille morte.*

In his oblique flight on the winds of caprice he discovered and recorded new conceptions of colour, rhyme, assonance, and suggestion. To him that alone was important 'et tout le reste est littérature'.

Matthew Josephson, in his introduction to J.-M. Carré's biography of Rimbaud makes the sweeping statement that '(Rimbaud's) single volume of poems . . . lives vigorously; whereas his friend Verlaine is forgotten. . . .' Whilst his work may have been overlooked in the furore of the grubbing for the key to his psychological make-up I think his poetry will last as long as that of Rimbaud.

But neither should we fall into the attitude of some American writers and bleat about his 'absinthe-tinted song' and the sign of

Saturn. Let us remember the Verlaine whose great capacity for loving could lead him to write for his wife Mathilde:

*'Tout grâce et toutes nuances
Dans l'éclat doux de ses seize ans,
Elle a la candeur des enfances,
Et les manèges innocents.'*

And to Rimbaud:

*'Or, le plus beau d'entre tous ces mauvais anges
Avait seize ans sous sa couronne de fleurs.'*

And again to God:

*'O mon Dieu, vous m'avez blessé d'amour
Et la blessure est encore vibrante.
O mon Dieu, vous m'avez blessé d'amour.'*

'Music before everything'—music and the tremendous force of love spontaneously and indiscriminately given. Because of these things Verlaine will never be forgotten. Those who saw the film 'Un Carnet de Bal' will recall the effective use of the lines from 'Colloque sentimentale' (Dans le vieux parc solitaire et glacé) when coupled with the valse grise.

Verlaine holds an important position in European poetry, coming as he did between the cold conventional poetry of the Parnassians and the new forms introduced and popularized by Rimbaud and Mallarmé. 'Fallait-il ce cinquantenaire?' was the title of an article on Verlaine by M. Yves-Gérard Le Dantec in 'Carrefour' of February this year. The theme of the article is that we should read and rediscover the poetry of Verlaine and not be content with remembering the date of his death. We can also dispense with pilgrimages to his house in Great College Street, with the Freudian enquiries and the dimensions of his skull and meet the real Verlaine, unstable, intemperate, weak yes, but judged as every writer should be—by his work—one of the most important poets of our time.

ROLAND GANT

MANUEL ALTOLAGUIRRE

I and the Light

I and the light invent you
city that now in the dawn
of fantasy and the sun
are born to the world;
city still indistinct
with blood and light and dreams
on your white façades.
I do not know what daybreak
I am flinging over the roofs,
nor what early-rising sun
lights the lowland, sea, the streets
I have within me.
We have exchanged
the world and I our light.
The world and I have exchanged.

(Translated from the Spanish
by HAROLD MORLAND)

ANTHERO DE QUENTAL

Redemption

Voices of the sea and trees and wind
When sometimes, soothing, in my sorrowing dream
I hear your mighty cadences, you seem
My own deep song of pain without an end;
O twilight word, the inward-breathing sound
Of voiceless things, a low mysterious psalm,
Are you the world's lamenting sigh, its calm
Despair and grief no sifting time can mend?

A spirit dwells in the wide immensity
And burns for freedom, suffers, and disturbs
The forms of change, whom no dead weight controls;
I speak your tongue that deeply stirs in me,
O voices of the sea, of mountains, all green herbs,
Twin-brother souls of mine, O captive souls!
(Translated from the Portuguese by HAROLD MORLAND)

THE POETRY OF DYLAN THOMAS

DYLAN THOMAS, *Deaths and Entrances* (Dents, 3s. 6d.).

When first one beholds a thing of beauty, one's deepest instinct is towards silence. However, this silence only punctuates a desire to share that beauty with others. As if in the queer arithmetic of poetry, appreciation of sheer beauty will augment its loveliness. The enjoyment of a poem is a kind poetry in itself. Criticism to be of any value capable of growing has to spring from earth of a similar texture, to that which went into the producing of the work of art. Good criticism therefore is rarer even than good poetry. Perhaps among the really great names of English literature, there is only one critic, that of Coleridge. It is merely because of the consideration, then, that what Martha has to say about Mary, may be of some interest to Tom, Jill and Harry that these poems are being reviewed. When confronted with poems like these, the ordinary conventions of reviewing simply collapse. There is nothing really to do but to sit back and enjoy oneself and to turn one's audience into the guests at a feast.

To the world in which the readers (and the writers) of POETRY QUARTERLY live out their lives to its just end Dylan Thomas, with his plenty and his well of words, is like some weird giant alien, alone yet not lonely, singing between birth and death, twined for that duration, to beauty and to purity. Men turn to lyrical poetry when the society into which they are sexed is at its most sordid. In an age of natural reason it was to Dryden and to Pope that they turned. Perhaps this explains the near silence of a didactic poet of such real pulse and power as Edgill Rickword.

I've seen men sit when nice with wine and talk, trading lines across a table with each other, that this poet has worked upon and pruned for hours, when sober and alone.

'Light breaks where no sun shines' while from some crested shelf a scholar takes gently with that affection reserved only for the few, a book of his that nestles with the work of the great dead, and men they tell me soon forget their sorrow and their woe.

*'I labour by singing light
Not for ambition or bread
Or the strut and trade of charms
On the ivory stages
But for the common wages
Of their most secret heart.*

*... Nor for the towering dead
With their nightingales and psalms
But for the lovers, their arms
Round the griefs of the ages,
Who pay no praise or wages
Nor heed my craft or art.'*

If nowhere in the work of Dylan Thomas one can find an exhortation to end poverty, what you will find in his verse, however, is a terrible courtesy and reverence for the very poor. There is the third part of his magnificent high requiem mourning the death of a slum child in a fire raid:

*'Into the organpipes and steeples
Of the luminous cathedrals,
Into the weathercocks' molten mouths
Rippling in twelve-winded circles,
Into the dead clock burning the hour
Over the urn of sabbaths
Over the whirling ditch of daybreak
Over the sun's hovel and the slum of fire
And the golden pavements laid in requiems
Into the bread in a wheatfield of flames,
Into the wine burning like brandy,
The masses of the sea
The masses of the sea under
The masses of the infant-bearing sea
Erupt, fountain, and enter to utter for ever
Glory glory glory
The sundering ultimate kingdom of genesis' thunder.'*

It is contained within the compass of a critic to mention that part of the great poetry of Dylan Thomas is contained in the fact that he took this poem away from 'Horizon' with the editor's reluctant permission and allowed it to be printed on a May Day broadsheet dedicated to Garcia Lorca.

The real importance of Dylan Thomas to us is not only that he is, with no apparent effort on his part, what most of us are trying to be, a real poet—but that he is the very salt of our lifetime, he belongs to these years, to these streets, to this place. He lives the same kind of life and earns the same kind of wages. Here is a real poet, in the very accents of everyday life. How far away is Yeats; and even Eliot is just as far away, as the very life he leads.

To sit talking to Dylan is like reading one of his poems. Although he is so sought after in fashionable literary circles, he himself is

more concerned with Blake and Traherne and Herbert and Silone and Caldwell than he is with his admirers' gods with Freud and Marx and Kafka and Proust.

Dylan Thomas is often accused of being the sort of writer who will peter out. This book should punish those who so accuse. He is also often but more sincerely stated to be obscure, this should suffice to correct that idea.

*'Paper and sticks and shovel and match
Why won't the news of the old world catch
And the fire in a temper start
Once I had a rich boy for myself
I loved his body and his navy blue wealth
And I lived in his purse and his heart
When in our bed I was tossing and turning
All I could see were his brown eyes burning
By the green of a one pound note
I talk to him as I clean the grate
O my dear it's never too late
To take me away as you whispered and wrote.'*

Nobody writing in the English language to-day possesses in a like degree the sheer indefinable something, that is the very essence and the very nature of pure poetry, not Auden, nor Campbell not even Eliot, and certainly not any other members of the generation immediately preceding his. Yet with all its simple yet magnificent splendour, with all its

*'for the whole
of the sea is hilly with whales'*

there is a suggestion of a lack of something, something that no other contemporary poet has in sufficient quantity to be of use to such pure poetry as this—but something which would perform in relation to this truly fine poetry, the function that varnish does to an oil painting. What that something is, is difficult to indicate, but it can be found in most of the world's literature that contains as much real art as can be found by the average reader in these poems of Dylan Thomas.

This is a personal Martha-like tribute, caused by an urge to share beauty and freedom forever with the air. But as it lacks that authority that only exists because of some real achievement, let me quote Herbert Read on Dylan Thomas. 'These poems cannot be reviewed, they can only be acclaimed. They contain the most absolute poetry that has been written in our time.'

PAUL POTTS

OBSCURITY IN MODERN POETRY

A lot of obscure poetry is being written to-day, and so the 'feel' of a poem in which the meaning lurks behind the words rather than is clearly defined, becomes the 'feel' that it is a contemporary poem. If you want to write a contemporary poem you therefore produce the 'feel' of obscurity. This sort of thing is no better and no worse than what has been done in every age by those who have little or nothing to say, but who like writing poetry. It is also quite uninteresting, except to the writer.

Again, if you have nothing much to say, but still feel you belong to a bits-and-pieces age and are naturally sad as a result, and if you construct a pattern of words both obscure and sad, the verses may really be expressive. You have only to try and see:

*'Love and guns the source of power,
The sad excitement on the face of war,
And children torn before the flower
Can tell them what the root was for.'*

I wrote this down this moment, without any wish to say anything, and quickly without any real thought; but just by mentioning love, guns, power, sad, excitement, war, children, torn, flower, root and (purpose), and putting them into rhythmical movement, I have performed an act of expression, which others can share I think. I don't myself know what they 'mean', only that certain words, like those above, come out of our general preoccupation to-day with destructive power and the sources of renewed life. A child may murmur over to herself the names of her dolls; a poet may murmur rhythmically to himself the names of his fears and hopes. I cannot see why anyone should dislike this sort of thing in itself. Personally I like murmuring poetry; its obscurity is part of the murmur and therefore enjoyable. It is, of course, a terribly limited taste, by itself.

But there is the point which Chesterton mentioned when discussing Dickens: 'Ordinary people dislike the delicate (obscure—where poetry is concerned) modern work, not because it is good or because it is bad, but because it is not what they asked for.' I think obscure poetry is objected to, so often, because it is not what people are asking for. Anybody who believes in poetry must want a poetry which ordinary people will go on asking for, a poetry which is as clear and energetic and sane as the mind we would like to see in every John Citizen who is now compelled to choose between a difficult freedom, an easy servitude, or chaos. But critics ought to

see further than this. And when poets have something to say and say it obscurely, we might ask whether the obscurity is necessarily part of the way they have to say it, and not just complain that it's not what we were asking for.

I think myself that obscurity is a necessary part of much good contemporary verse, and that the quarrel, therefore, about it is not really a quarrel about obscurity at all, but a disguised wish for a different sort of poetry—'Damn it, Tom, don't be so poetical', as Byron said to Tom Moore. For fifty years the 'damn it Tom' has gone on. Kipling and Henley and later Masfield said it to Dowson, Wilde and early Yeats; almost as soon as Pound and Eliot appeared, Auden and MacNeice got up to say it again to them; the anti-political 'Personalists' no sooner begin to write than they say it to themselves (see the end of 'The Poet at Bay', by Francis Scarfe in *Transformation I*). Frost in America says it to Tate and Hart Crane.

It's a good damn, if we know what it means. Heaven knows we need social poetry at the moment, which is simple and level-headed because its material is the common impulses, desires, feelings, attitudes, of ordinary people at their best, and because the poet tries only to reinforce the best against the worst without trying to complicate it by filtering it through the maze of his own mind. But simple poetry is the most difficult of all to write in a divided age. We might get one sort if we had someone as passionately single-minded and odd as Blake—the true simpleton. We might get another sort if we had someone as concerned with ordinariness, as temperamentally afraid of any whiff of Poesy, and as patient with his gift, as Frost. But the possibility of writing simple poetry for most is bound up with the problem of how to find a group whose vocabulary of ordinary life is vigorous, simple, and stable enough to enable the poet to make poetry for the group with it. And where is such a group with such a language? The alternatives—to fill your poetry with the simple rant and rhetoric of political emotion, or to choose a faded vocabulary of simplicity from the past—is merely to abdicate.

Let us go on asking for simplicity while working for the kind of community that will make it possible; but we mustn't, as Dr. Richards reminds us, ask for an act of uniformity against poets. If poets want to be obscure, let them; and let us see what they achieve by it. But the first question, I suggest, is 'obscure for whom?' T. S. Eliot has come in for a lot of fussy disapproval, largely I suspect again, because he has deliberately written for a small

audience of people who can, because they more or less share his intellectual background and have covered the same range of books, understand his vocabulary of word and symbol. Mr. Eliot has said he would prefer above all to write for the naive. He hasn't, because there are no naive. The worst audience, for a poet, as Mr. Eliot went on to say, are the semi-educated. I think the objection to Eliot's way of writing is really a wish to live in an age, when a man of great learning and religious passion, like Eliot, could share that passion, as Milton did, with a wide audience through an accepted and public mode of poetry.

As for the obscurity which I feel is a necessary part of good modern poetry, it is an obscurity which occurs because the poet is attempting to clarify a state of mind before it is translated into the rigid forms of logic and 'sense' necessary for public use. It seems to me that logic (and even grammar) clarify by limiting the goings-on in the mind, and by forcing words to specify a meaning felt immediately to be relevant to a public situation. But look at these lines of Spender:

*'Our single purpose was to walk through snow
With faces swung to their prodigious North
Like compass iron. As clerks in whited Banks
With bird-claw pens column virgin paper
To snow we added footprints.*

The words, in this, instead of being used to limit, are used to release the goings-on of the mind; they throw out tentacular meanings in many directions to meet other meanings, and so criss-cross a whole area of feeling and notion, which is thus mapped out. They can release and not limit meaning in this way, just because the writer deliberately avoids the one-track clarity of logic or *plain* sense; but in doing this they are doing their special work more and not less successfully.

The grammatical structure of these lines is, in one way, misleading. Similar structures are used publicly to say things that are relevant to something that can be shown or pointed at; but in these lines nothing is said; the verses are not trying to say anything, but to be, to stand for a state of mind with no reference to anything except itself. A poet must use grammar of a sort, however, because he cannot in any other way describe the goings-on of the mind. They are *goings-on*, and to get words on the move in order to represent what goes on, he must use the devices of grammar, the shoving and pushing effects which grammatical order can produce.

(Words totally divorced from grammatical structure adhere in lumps of meaning without movement—even verbs by themselves only label movement, and can only be made to represent it by taking part in a directed flow with the help of grammatical structure. The weakness of so much 'surrealist' verse seems to me to be due to this; the verse is so often a succession of inert lumps of meaning, which does anything but suggest the appalling vigour of the subliminal mind.) The relevance of these lines of Spender—let us say their experience of being in a waste land with only our fragile habits to help us, of finding ourselves forced to immerse in the destructive element—their relevance is not factual but historical—they map out a state of mind which is felt to be relevant to living here and now.

Perhaps this will be enough to suggest why obscurity may be thought of as the result of avoiding some of the simplifications necessary to the logical language of useful and verifiable reference. To avoid such simplification and to embrace obscurity is one of the functions of poetry, one of the most interesting and the most rewarding. Such poetry is, of course, a poetry of exploration and discovery, and therefore 'unpopular'; it is also obviously a poetry which can be abused, written to enable a man to admire what he takes to be profundities but what are only unresolved crudities.

I think there are several kinds of obscurity, one or two possibly bogus or at best a self-indulgence, the others legitimate; and that every obscure poem has to be judged by its own method and intention. A general objection to obscurity seems to me clearly a disguised wish to live in a simpler, more coherent society. We all wish this; but I for one hope that, when we do get there, poets will be still allowed to write obscurely as well as simply. The self-discoveries of human beings, in fits of abnormal concentration, will still be valuable.

ALEC KING

(Reprinted from '*Meanjin Papers*', Brisbane)

C. BUSBY SMITH

Four Lenten Moods

I

Entering the still month like a spear of light
plunging its sharpness in a dark crystal's wave,
the air recedes from us leaving us silently
singly rotating on a remote personal axis.

Like a dark seed-pod, naked in the barren sunlight,
deprived of the flesh of the petals, the soul lies open
to the probing, insidious intellect's questioning;
which discovers again the bleak bare bone of reason

Which is no reason, discovered again late at last,
but merely a hard dissonant dry pattern of words
built up to shroud the throbbing wound of truth,
too bitter a fruit to flower out of our branches.

II

The austere, barren, black rock in the wind;
the raven starving in the winter's spite;
the skeleton white against the blue hawthorn hedge;
images of winter; the cold Lenten mind.

The exquisite pain of ultimate renunciation,
the weak face, the dry skin stretched like a drum;
the intense moment of forbidden passion;
the smashed gourd fallen from the dead hand.

This is the negative desire bred out of longing,
curbed by the intellect's frozen criticism;
the eye blind; the hand chill in the sunlight;
the wasted manna festering in the desert.

III

The owl whose feathers are the moon's rain
frozen to waxen fingerprints of bronze
blinks from its cage in the dead tree, waiting, waiting,
for the sudden death of the treacherous, still season.

And in the branches of his mind's dark tree
clawing its twigs like thorns across his reason
the grey priest in his cell eats out his heart
while flesh and spirit wage black wars within him.

Beneath his raven hands sharp as a murderer's knife
the heart lies pierced like a martyr on a cross
nailed to obedience out of a grey book's laws
and confined by a strange Christ's ineffectual shadow.

IV

Now is the hour of liberation. The moment when love
falls in the morning like a wounded swift on the sill
of the heart's open window. Now is the hour
when the walls of the cell crumble in ruins around us.

Oh call now, after the circle of hours grey,
beauty at last by its right and wonderful name,
and, after preparation, the silent meditation,
open wide arms, hearts, eyes, to gather in the sun.

Step forth now Christ with your terrible, tangible beauty,
with the scented bright flowers sprouting from the nail's wounds,
and out of the green trembling meadow of your womb
bear us again, children as light as angels.

PAUL POTTS

No Bread to Break

Fear creaks like an opening gate
In front of the prison of silence.
Nobody's prose can make room for this thought
And the legs of my muse were not made
 for tall mountains,
But my hunger is queueing before a great peak
And my heart is a particle
Torn from hot things,
From the Host and the Sun
The thought a great poem,
This love of all things, frail, furrowed and failed
Yet these words are not language
Just talk from an empty, a terrible, table.

William Butler Yeats
1865-1939

He shrugged a winking shoulder at a world
Where kings were lonely and where clerks were kings.
And now throughout time's colony
His verse will stop, occasionally to tell
One here, another there
How it is waiting to be replenished
Like blue tall thin and ready Wicklow Irish glass
By the wine that's in their hearts.

FRED MARNAU

Trellis of Roses

Where the vine-leaf shaded doves
take the last hours in the sun,
there my forehead and my eyes
rose-trees branches have overspun.

And there, weather-beaten I
—far from here where nothing ends—
by the roses trellised lie,
thorny baskets close my hands.

My mouth is overhung by moss
and in a hundred arduous ways
did the time of all men pass.

How they saved my count betrays,
yet each one often bore a face,
lonely or travelling, of burning rays.

(Translated by ERNST SIGLER)

JOHN BAYLISS

Fahtepur Sikri

India is never silent but at Fahtepur Sikri
the sunlight falls on the deserted city
and there is no love nor laughter in that place;

But a great arch towers in hostility
over the village that lies beyond the palace
hiding its fear within the boundary wall.

And here, where the Emperor stood, there is trace
only of apes, and the endless sky
shakes on his work the winding dust.

O priest whose mosque mocks the passer-by,
whose spirit still moves the malignant ghost,
what has become of your dignity?

And what O Emperor, of your lost ladies,—
Hindu, Christian, Mohammedan,
—do they share your bed in a tolerant Heaven?

Stone is silent but the setting sun
mingles with bells of the village cattle
and life still flickers within the wall.

HOWARD SERGEANT

Lyric by the River

From where I lean upon the edge of darkness
the river holds its lanterns to your face,
and where your walking breaks
the surface in a mazurka of stars
you are the syllables the wise-lipped water makes.

And wherever water gleams or over pebbles
pours its geasa* across my bones, how climbs crow'snest
my heart for your rich latitudes.
Come sun or lamp or candle's shine,
no water winks but wears your eyelids' moods.

This is the moment when most you speak to me—
but what, to the vein, is a voice that traffics in fire
when lips define no terminus;
italics of light that only
lay stress on the many black waters between us?

To you, O river-girl, who never flowed
with caution through my childhood's rumours, I bring
the fabulous Round Table of
my faith that this October falling
may call me migrant, moving southwards to your love.

* 'geasa' (or, alternatively, 'geis')—mystic prohibitions or
taboos; from British Mythology.

ANTONY BORROW

Betrayal

The hooded bird who watched beside black pool
Taut on the stricken tree's smooth limb, saw all:
The two who trysted and the five who crept.

The narrow beast thin-furrowed in the reeds
With pointed ear heard all: the long embrace,
The silent moment and the scream of steel.

The murdered god, who dying stained the rank
Wet herbage woven to his midnight shroud,
Sprang monsters from his veins to plead a hymn.

And these remain: the five, and she who laughed;
A shape that slides to shade; a bird
Gliding with ravished mouth, tongueless and red.

Picaresque

A crouching beast sprawls underneath the hill,
One hairy paw upon a globe of tears,
About his lips the awful curving smile
Whose source is love. He has stood on sad shores
Watching the sea's cold ghosts glide in by night
To trouble the tired coast; and silently
The pale fen girl move through the brittle reeds
With candles in her hands; and, man or tree,
On the dark hill; he has seen all:
All fragments, moon-mosaics flung like leaves
About his bare untenanted abode.
He wanders the long road away from men
A lonely traveller, and grimly sees
Their terraced lights shine from the living hill.

Biography

Winter's apostle, early in his grief
Took the dark wreath before his mourning year,
Twisted a brittle tendril in the stalks
And set it like a beacon in his hair.

He was the mole broke faith with yesterday
To set the towers trembling; he the sun
Sent crazy shadows racing on the plain.
He was the tree grew deep, whose swollen root
Tore the long hill, scarred out a fissure's scream.
He was convolvulus about a king
Strangling a monument with strident flower.
His was the voice that floated from the fen:
A song, a shout, a tumult and a pain.

And his the throat that choked on smiling steel
Spilling his sorrow to the hungry earth.
His fury broken, his great clamour spent,
An iron trumpet echoes with his tears.

JOHN SINGER

Soft in These Evenings

Soft in these evenings of a hoping time,
After the dog-days, in a flat quietness
Of almost barren safety, soft and with echoing grace,
'Yes, I still like you' and 'I told you so,' the face
Lovely, like a whip of curling memories.

The circle is no treadmill cries the hero.
See, I have found the centre and the sun.
Here warmth is, all my beloved could offer.
Here light is, all philosophy can proffer,
I die and am redeemed, am lost and am One.

Soft in these evenings when the rooms are dead,
And people are cyphers in a printer's galley.
Only the light lives, and the prescient seeds
Of sudden moving, away, anywhere, while nothing bleeds
Any longer, but the drip, the repetitive drip of habit.

Slow turns the lazy wheel, the strong are caught
In maniac postures trampling the yielding mud,
Soft in these evenings the far-off bellowing
Of useless rages, and the indifferent billowing
Of seas which have forgotten even the drowned.

Even the jubilant quick with lusts intact,
Of automatic hope and mere momentum.
Not I, whispers the hero, and you, not I.
See, here I walk who have never denied you, sky
Rain and root, bosom and beyond blindness endlessly.

The Returning Always

The ghost who is guest, the host
who is unseen, whose presence is terrible.

Look man, see him weaving and walking,
enormous in Europe, his bowed shape talking.

The ghost who is no guest, the serf who is master,
beyond cash, beyond culture, beyond conscience, beyond law.

Who flickers in the widow's eyes and the begging child,
the ghost condemning, the condoling ghost, the shadow.

The plea like a sword, he, dried blood on tank
rusting in rotting field, the sprouting crucifix.

Green as the unborn seasons and Oh so old,
so bent, so bitter-wise, so cold, the known ghost.

The most well-known ghost, the twisting thorn
blue in the heart of soldiers and of systems.

The accusing ghost and he who laughs,
whose weeping is terrible, who watches the bread-line

And the thin soup trickling like grey hoping
into the greybeard's bowl; who is familiar with prisons.

The man-shaped ghost, the ghost making man
(Blood-written slogans) the homeless architect.

The musing ghost, alone on the other bank
of the toiling river where love like a hag

Like a cast-off drudge squats dully whimpering;
the ghost with the abdicating trembling prince.

See, brother, how he walks the world,
begging for Europe with history's lash and whimper.

(Watching men everywhere dragoon their conscience,
squabbling like evil grammars; the waiting patient ghost)

The ghost for whom revenge will always come,
And for whom it is never sweet.

For whom, dear brother, it is not even revenge,
but blooms with canker, rose and stem, like God, like a principle.

Gliding on inch by hour like the shadowy seasons,
Counting all tears and wounds and wrongs with ghost's
accountancy.

A. WALTER MARSDEN

Hemisphere

Malaise is on me
Your memory is a pearl in the oyster of my mind
A tall dark girl with a pleasant voice
You beside me cast no reflection in the mirror

Somewhere the green ruin of a star

I, shy as an assassin,
Follow the old woman with ankles swol'n and thick
Through the wet and windy streets glazed with neon light,
She who cleaned your cottage.
Bowed her head, but I see the poise of yours,
Greying, thin, untidy the growth on her scalp instead
 of your petal-curl of lip and lash and hair,
Barren her body, lacking the promise of yours.

Wet and windy the streets, and the moon is waning,
That summer the leaves danced against the twilight sky,
Grasses high above us in the afternoon, and in the
 dark the fierce, glad stars
And Dvorak's green Largo from the New World.
Somewhere now
 the vile squeaking of a wry-necked fife.

I lose her in the crowds:
Seeking again, it is you rather than she I hunt,
Profile glimpsed in doorway, turn of limb,
But not, O never not, the way
Your feet were placed, the curve of thigh and torso,
Not thus the hands, the height and colouring.

Facing the Pennines, on my left the Pole; Christianity
 and Africa to my right,
I am troubled by a vision of you;
But there are mirages, and Dead Sea fruit
And at my back the weeds of the Sargasso Sea.

DENISE LEVERTOFF

Autumn Journey

Out of autumn like a blade
mysteriously engraved, flashes the frost;
stars and leaves are blown to the brown earth
and burning distantly
encircle evening in a web of smoke.

Now once again the wanderer deserts
the comfortable myth and drowsy mansion
where all these months he lay entranced, and heard
the soft forgetful murmur of his flowers
lovingly bent over their mirrored doubles.

As he looks back, a window lit—
fantastic lemon fruit in northern woods.
lost in a high façade—suggests
a latent music, and he knows the sound
is both 'Farewell' and promises of treasure
over the hill, among the burning worlds.

Regent Street, W.1

The long street is silent under stars;
red, gold, green, the formal fugue of light
continues northward. Stones of curved façades
take on a lustre and a secret look,
awaiting miracles or poised for love.
Chill the wind round All Souls', the air
bitter as wine; but life is in each breath,
the stillness is not death's, but as it were
a hush in music or a dancer's pause.
Though once the trouble on a sleeping face
darkened my mood, and fear
lay like a leopard in the shade of joy,
to-night I know that pain is only a part
of fierce and beautiful life; that silent stone
anticipates the solitudes of Spring
I had no heart for; and I know the hour
grows like a branch, the promise of bright leaves.

WALFORD MORGAN

Soliloquy One

from the frail fingers the electric needles of sight
from the haunted eyes the one unrefracted tear

from the loosened hair
the one incommunicable touch of time

from our love
one moment not our own

one moment caught between the tide
and the flying gull one tear

which the hidden years recapture
and the hidden tide will drown

and time like a frail acanthus leaf
that sprawls upon the sand

the wind in pale fingers
of shadow

do you remember the occasion
now that summer drives a flower

through your skull and you speak
with the sudden voice of music

now with the wrinkled ocean
in your ear

for once we lay together and you heaped
with regretful fingers

the transparent fossils from the sand
and behind the moonlit gateway

saw the shore grow flower-gestured
and wild with silver

a white rain covering your features and playing
in long waves of light upon your hair

do you remember one hour between day and night
an eternal hour two paces from the dawn

a time that was to mean departure
is it the gentle laving of the sea I hear

upon that shore now it is over
the same fine grains of sand

sifted through my palms that measured out our power
your palm so small and so prophetic

that now its grains have gone
it is the beginning of a journey

the sun has climbed and the moon is over
may heaven have mercy have mercy and pity every lover

AUDRIE RUSSELL

The Pharisees

Fearfully they live, these people,
Forever afraid
Their groping fingers might touch
The edge of a new Nineveh.

They walk the dark forests
Of imagination,
Knowing the sleekness of a leopard
In the darkness springing.

Fevered their haste, as they count
The stars; in the madness
And tumult, contemplating
The certainty of nothingness.

They say, Be wary of Living,
Of fullness,
Which is a steel trap, baited,
And the bait is tainted.

Over shattered bone and torn flesh,
Carefully,
They take their way, precisely
So as not to soil their feet.

Yet they never walked the mountain-tops,
They are incompleated.
Neither can they descend
To the still, green depths.

They cry Heaven to witness, continually
That there is no mark
On their white hands; see, we are clean,
We have been most careful.

You shall know them by their pale faces,
And mind's small stature,
Along the narrow highway of their lives,
Are gates, forever barred.

One day they shall stand upon the hills,
And never see,
Cloud upon cloud, millions of stars,
In the wind-sifted heavens.

ROLAND GANT

Brother, Tall Brother

Brother, tall brother, will you help us?
Help us to find those things
we seek and can never find?

For what are you looking, little ones?
Tell me that I may know
for what to look.

We are looking for the little house
of marzipan and gingerbread,
for the boat of lilies drawn by swans
and the rose of crimson silk
that blooms alone in the snow.
Will you help us, brother,
for you are taller than us
and can see above the bushes?
You are stronger than us
and can leap across rivers.
You are older than us
therefore you are wiser,
will you help us find these things?

You can see farther than I
and can leap across years,
you are so much wiser, little ones.
You will find them without searching
but I have lost them for ever.

ALAN ROOK

Memory

War's image crosses constantly my mind
and leaps a flame to flicker in my heart
and guns continue restless, as the wind
subtle and swift as leopard carries hurt

deep to the dark recess of memory
where the last images incredulous move
of cities breathing out their agony
of grief and patience in a flame of love.

Who would not clasp the hand of his redeemer
or listen to the laughing voice upraised
in song and silver story to refute

the lies with which we celebrated summer
the rivulets of dread with which we praised
the simple dogmas issuing from his throat.

JULIAN ORDE

The Use of Moths

Moths were made for the pleasure of candles.
In her salty grave the fish-wife turned and said:
'Moths were made for the pleasure of candles,
But these grey fish are my muscular last bed.'

The cod were naked as any woman;
Under an icicle tree the gardeners adored.
'Beautiful children!' mourned the woman,
'My heart-warm daughter gave joy to a frozen sword.'

'I miss the bees in this weight of water,
Each bee's a day I thought when I was a kid,
Each day was a palace I built, but later
I knew the roof was the echoing bone of my head.'

'Moths were made for the pleasure of candles,
That was my faith,' the fish woman, groaning, said,
'But the sea has no pity for dry, bright candles,
So I sway with the cod in the night of my last bed.'

UNA MONK

The Unaware

Happy are they who armed and armoured go
With a bright blindness of the heart, whose ear
Can catch in tones of love no undertones of fear;
Who walk a tight-rope, thinking it a highway.

For them the music sounds, with suffering
Of strings and crying of the brass. The bell's
Loud heart for them wears out its breast of bronze
Ringing their triumphs, and they may not know
Darkness, but face the sun and never see
Their infidel shadows that defile our feasts.

REVIEWS

JACQUES MARITAIN, *Art and Poetry* (Editions Poetry London, 6s.); NORMAN NICHOLSON, *The Old Man of the Mountains* (Faber & Faber, 6s.); *Selected Poems of Hugh Macdiarmid* (William Maclellan, 6s.); W. S. GRAHAM, *The Seven Journeys* (William Maclellan, 6s.); JONATHAN HANHAN, *Poems to Mary* (The Runa Press, 8s. 6d. net).

Jacques Maritain is one of those few philosophers who are not intimidated by a work of art. As Remy de Gourmont has somewhere pointed out, there is something carnal about the realm of art; something which predisposes the artist to a life of sensuality, disorder and excess. Contrasting with this, we get the condition of mind, conducive to pure or abstract thinking, which is regular, chaste or even ascetic. The philosopher lives next to the Temperance man.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that the metaphysician often reacts to the specific work of art as a shy young curate suddenly announced into the presence of a naked courtesan. This incarnation of concreteness, this apotheosis of the 'too, too solid flesh' greatly perturbs the Puritan of logic. Over art's nude torso of erotic radium he hastily flings the covering garment of some safe preconception to spare his modesty; to hide his gaze from the embarrassment of this bare uncategorized truth.

M. Maritain is not such a one. Believing in a God-given world, where all the basic laws are good, he finds in art a process and function analogous to thought and just as justified. Metaphysics, he writes, 'keeps to the line of knowledge and the contemplation of the truth, poetry keeps to the line of making and the delight procured by beauty'. Neither is he frightened by finding this law—this twin basic rhythm of conscious experience—operating in the field of flesh and roses, dance and song. Jacques Maritain is no latter-day St. Dominic, killing the nightingale that sang outside his cell as the luring embodiment of the Devil. Poetry, he writes, is 'the divination of the spiritual in the realm of the senses, to be expressed in the same realm,' and speaks of it glimpsing the spiritual 'in the flesh, by the point of the senses sharpened by the mind'.

It is not in this book, however, but in his earlier 'Art and Scholasticism' that the author sets out his main theory of art. Here, we get the budding ramification, the free leafing of afterthought and illustration to the sound hard wood of the former volume. *Art*

and Poetry may be considered as a kind of pictorial supplement to the comprehensive manual of analysis which the earlier work provides.

So he contributes in his essays on Georges Rouault, Marc Chagall and Severini phrases of homage, detection, and pleasure thick with the pigments of intuition. Here he employs the method of art, and even the cobwebs of his abstraction find themselves coloured and gay with paint. Thus he comes to speak of Rouault 'passing through the world of human abysses' in order to create those 'monstrous miserable flesh-tints captured in the deaf harmonies and the precious transparencies of the most complex matter'. He finds in these pictures 'the wound of Sin', 'the misery of fallen Nature, penetrated by a gaze without connivance and an art which does not bend'. Theology, perhaps, one may retort. If so, at least a theology whose truth does not wish to cancel out beauty.

The rest of the book is constituted of aphorisms and reflections, which the author terms 'Dialogues', upon contemporary figures and opinions; and an essay entitled 'The Freedom of Song' upon the 'existential music' of Arthur Lourié.

This book is one of philosophy's rare illuminated missals; and many who have no inclination to dwell beneath the patched and renovated roof of St. Thomas Aquinas may read it with pleasure.

No slight element contributing to our enjoyment of this work is the delicately precise translation of Mrs. Elva de Pue Matthews which the author himself has highly commended.

In spite* of the earnest and unrelenting advertisements by the Rationalist Press against the dangers of superstition, religious poetry is having a boon. In the face of this last-mentioned venerable's body's dated and side-whiskered admonition a new current seems to be setting in. The artist of this decade is getting God-conscious again, just as he went Marx-minded in the 'thirties.

We have had a glut of sacred drama, and Norman Nicholson now adds himself to the spiritual progeny of Eliot in this field, which include such names as Anne Ridler, J. D. C. Pellow, and Ronald Duncan.

His latest work, *The Old Man of the Mountains*, is a play in verse based on the story of Elijah and his miracle of the rain. This actual drama from ancient Samaria is readapted to a modern setting in the author's native Cumberland. A modern circumstance is introduced as well, and instead of the action being founded upon the ding-dong jealousy of two exclusive gods, the conflict here between

Baal and Jehovah is shown to be a wide material issue involving farming and finance in addition to faith.

Baal represents, then, through his agent Squire Ahab, the 'big business man' in agriculture, the monopolist in raw produce, the cornerer of grain, the smash-and-grab farmer who ruins his land by growing his crop at breakneck speed for short-range profit; in fact, the public enemy defined so well by St. Ambrose as the 'Hogger of the harvest'. Jehovah, on the other hand, through the mouth of Elijah, a 'statesman' of the dales, stands for a humane husbandry, the culture of the land as a way of life where the soil and its workers are united in mutually expressing the same healthy and seasonal rhythm.

Now the test of any legend or tradition is its power to become an operative force beyond the time and place of its origin. Norman Nicholson—adapter-in-extraordinary—has shown how this can be accomplished. Tradition exists in an active state only by accepting the metamorphosis of modern dress; and the guardians and wardrobe-masters of tradition are the poets of the present who look towards the future. Mr. Nicholson is such a one.

Along, then, with the modernization of the problem and conflict in this drama, goes a corresponding localization of speech. And so, though pleasantly surprised, we are not in any way jarred to hear the Biblical rotundity of Elijah often changed for regional utterance. Thus it is that the same person who talks of watching

'... the hours

Alone on the fells with the helm wind and the Lord',

knowing 'how the shafts of eternity strike to the bone', can turn and say quite easily, 'Don't bother about me, Ruth. I'm daft side out to-day', or 'I'm feeling as dry as a haddock', or talk of something serving 'as well as owt'. This actualizing idiom, which the poet makes Elijah employ, lends him the lineaments of immediate reality which the Biblical figure does not possess. In this version he comes to us clad in the essential garments of human dignity, akin to Wordsworth's characters of Michael and the Leech-gatherer, but more natural; less 'uffish' and stiff-necked.

This is a play about a miracle; and the spirit of our time which swallows poetry gets a little restive on matters such as this. Yet, perhaps, no other phenomena is so appropriate to poetry. What, after all, is a metaphor but a miracle of language, a violation of the literal, a raising of logic to a higher plane? The world, in general, fortunately, unlike Lamb's Caledonian, does not 'stop a metaphor

like a suspected person in an enemy's country'. It does not insist we speak 'upon the square', and graciously permits a figurative use of speech. Now, speaking as an unbeliever with the next, what else is a miracle but the figurative action, the symbolic gesture which frees us from an impasse? To use a phrase of Nicholas Calas, a miracle is only the materialized dream.

The miracle in this play, however, is of an honest unpretentious nature. Mr. Nicholson has clearly wished to ease the burden and strain on modern credibility. The miracle, here, is well watered down. There is plenty of thunder, rain and lightning, but no neat celestial marksmanship by which the altar-offering is deftly speared and roasted.

This resolution of the drama by the miraculous, where the denouement is brought about by the *deus ex machina*, has, however, one disadvantage. The surprise and climax which such a method produces is, properly speaking, more atmospheric, more poetic, than dramatic. So, in the great plays of the past the supernatural performs a secondary rôle, and though the witches of 'Macbeth' vanish and appear in miraculous fashion their prophecy of a wood marching against the hero is realized through natural, not supernatural, means.

According to the *Times Literary Supplement* this play, when presented at the 'Mercury', held the attention of children absorbed and steadfast. This power, however, to conceive a catharsis of pity and terror for tiny tots is no adult measure of a full-size play. 'Ædipus Rex,' 'Lear,' and 'Ghosts' have a sense of dramatic suspense and climax far beyond the scope of kindergarten canons. This is not to deprecate *The Old Man of the Mountains* so much as to maintain that Mr. Nicholson cannot claim this jury of the young to pronounce a high dramatic value attaching to his simple catharsis.

Apart from the convincing and intriguing sense of the natural and the human in the characters of this play, its last attraction probably rests upon the poet's vital descriptive language. So much descriptive poetry kills off the object which it defines. There is nothing of this pin-and-butterfly speech in the writing of this play. Norman Nicholson has a bird's-eye-view and worm's-eye-view combined in observation. He excels in detecting minutiae; small points of appearance and comparison. So the Raven in the play sees 'The dale-folk crawl like ticks in an old sheep's wool' and soars 'till the sun is cased like brass about his thighs', while two 'prose' characters observe 'The clouds are like bruises' and 'the water looks as if it's got goose-flesh'.

There is animation enough in this language alone to have made *The Old Man of the Mountains* worth while.

My friend Ian Finlay once remarked that Hugh Macdiarmid had done for Scotch poetry what Parnell did for Irish politics.

Perhaps this calls for a short postscript. The term 'nationalism' may spring to mind, and with it all those fol-de-rols of pseudo-peasant-and-popular revivals. Nothing could be farther from the virile spirit of Mr. Macdiarmid's verse than this cultural drawing-room flag-talk. Here is no careful thistle-decked eisteddfod; no metrical piping-in of the haggis. The conscious archaic and sacred attuning to the patriotic note is quite absent here. There is something of an elemental force about Macdiarmid, and the elements are not, after all, wholly Scotch.

Most of the poems in this selection (1925-39) are in Middle Scots, and a glossary is appended at the end of the volume. Certainly such lyrics as 'The Bonnie Broukit Bairn' and 'O Wha's Been Here Afore Me, Lass,' presents us with a music we English have lost, and which Scotland has hardly heard since Burns.

Unlike the latter, his English compositions are no formal gymnastics or sedulous feats in an intimidating foreign tongue. Macdiarmid is not afraid of genius, and makes himself at home wherever he finds it. And so he 'swings' the Russian poet Blok powerfully, casually back into Scots, and renders a long poem of Rilke into English with no nice queasiness.

'A moment in eternity', again, an English poem, rises to a singing mystic pitch transcending most of the religious verse to be found in Nicholson's Penguin collection. By this I do not mean it is better verse; merely that the pressure seems higher here. One feels, vicariously, through these lines the gush of waters from the font of the god-head:

*'Lifting the crystal sources in dim hills
And swinging them far out like bells of glass
Peeling pellucidly'.*

In all, Macdiarmid is most exciting, tonic, intoxicating; often very bad ('The Hymn to Lenin' is a lovely period-piece). Even his mistakes have guts, however. They are forthright happy stamping wrongs; and 'energy is a kind of beauty', as William Blake once truly observed.

'The poet conventionally offers what he knows he has found, but Dylan Thomas offers the process of discovery itself.' So wrote Francis Scarfe in 1940. Similarly one might say that W. S. Graham

proffers the process of manufacture rather than the made-up article. In this way the poet gives his own commentary on the art of writing; conducts himself around his own creative domain.

This confession of verbal adventuring is clearly made in the following lines:

*'I am a scholar of seas. My alphabet steers
The mull of a kettle-drummed villager's land of choirs.'*

'I build an iliad in a limpid dome', he writes, again describing the act of composition. 'Odyssey' would have been a better word, for these *Seven Journeys* are a navigation through an epithet-jostling archipelago. Add to this that the Odyssey would not be 'told', but 'written' and 'sailed' at the same time; a narrative with sea-boots on, so to speak.

The work in this book is the poet's first production. Since then in *Second Poems* and *Cage without Grievance* the images and adjectives have thinned out a lot.

Setting out in the footsteps of an earlier bard this minstrel-boy is now to be heard gaily harping his abracadabra in a more independent and lyrical fashion.

Somewhere in his poem 'The Excursion' Wordsworth has a passage on all those feeling but uncreative minds; those whose hearts record more than their tongues can tell, those bards of the inarticulate:

*'Oh! many are the Poets that are sown
By Nature; men endowed with highest gifts,
The vision and the faculty divine;
Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse.'*

This, it seems, well describes the mind that wrote the *Poems to Mary*. All of them are penetrated with a deep grief for the death of the poet's wife whom this book commemorates. The grief, however, remains bound by the shackles of mortality, for the tension of words has not lifted it to the level where even pain is a song.

The honest and sincere writer of these verses recognizes his limitations:

*'Heart-ache no utterance has.'
'Dumb is love-pain.'*

Unfortunately for every thousand Rose Aylmers one only can mourn as Landor did.

DEREK STANFORD

AGATE OR EMERALD?

A Shorter Ego: The Autobiography of James Agate. Volumes I and II (Harraps, 8s. 6d. each).

Mr. Bax has just made the mistake of publishing an attack upon theatre critics—and following it with a really bad play. Therefore, it would seem wise for creative writers to refrain from casting aspersions upon their own reviewers, who can so soon and so successfully turn the tables upon them. However, the publication of a shortened version of Mr. Agate's endless *Ego* gives me the opportunity of defending modern poetry against the uninformed and slapdash diatribes the author and owner of this *Ego* is in the habit of hurling at it. For, despite this poetic blindspot in his make-up, there is no doubt that James Agate is a very fine critic, which makes him a dangerous enemy of modern poets. Moreover, he is an extremely able Shakespearean critic, appreciating Shakespeare's poetry as much as his mastery of stagecraft. But Shakespeare trumpeted and roared, and Mr. Agate loves trumpeting and roarings—in fact, he both trumpets and roars himself, but without the poetry or the music of Shakespeare. He has never troubled to attune himself to, or understand, the more muted and indirect artistry of Eliot, of Auden, or of Marnau.

What I would say to Mr. Agate is: 'Home, James, and forget about your horses. Forget for a time, too, the theatre, and the bottle of wine, and how much better Bernhardt was than the modern actresses. Above all, forget about your preconceived ideas of modern poetry. Then go into your fields and read Auden and Spender, read Comfort and Dymont and Treece. Try to comprehend the new assonances, word-music and thought-patterns in which these poems are woven. Regard the intensity of thought and feeling which motivate these poets. Note how, even where they have failed, they have opened new roads of technical development in poetic form. See how the explorations and experiments of Auden, Barker, Gascoyne and Laura Riding have put new tools ready-made into the hands of Treece, Gardiner and G. S. Fraser. In fact, make a real effort to understand both the intention and the achievement of each contemporary poet. If, after this serious and sympathetic effort, you are still unconverted, then home, James, to Patience Strong, Billy Brown and Sir Alan Herbert.'

The *Shorter Ego* (and decreasing Mr. Agate's ego is an achievement in itself of which the publishers must be very proud) does not,

of course, consist mainly of poets. But occasionally his blind hatred of Bloomsbury is allowed to show itself, and while it amuses those of us who are old admirers of his, it may mislead that much wider public which this new diminished edition is designed to attract. That is why I think it is important to persuade Mr. Agate to change his mind about contemporary verse. After all, we are used to the critics of every age spurning the best poetry of their time. The body critique slated Shelley, Blake, Tennyson and Swinburne when they were writing their best work, so we cannot expect Dylan Thomas and Henry Treece to be universally appreciated to-day. But it would be a novel experience to find Mr. Agate, in the last volume of his *Ego* (I suppose it will end one day?), reversing his previous judgments upon them. It would not only be a good thing for modern poetry, but also, I believe, for Mr. Agate.

Finally, let me say that, Bloomsbury apart, Mr. Agate's shorter autobiography is as entertaining as those of us who knew the longer volumes expected it to be. This condensed ego is, in fact, a good substitute for dried egg.

PETER BAKER

CONTRABAND

HENRY MILLER, *The Cosmological Eye* (Nicholson & Watson) 10s. 6d.).

The work of Henry Miller in small doses has been appearing in literary periodicals with increasing regularity for some years now. But the number of people who have read his three novels, *Tropic of Cancer*, *Tropic of Capricorn* and *Black Spring* is necessarily limited because they were published in Paris and have been banned in England and America by the power of an aged, prudish and dirty-minded middle-class authority which is absurdly out of touch with the thought, feeling and mental climate of its own children. It is perfectly true that Miller is a writer who will always provoke controversy. Of German origin, he has a somewhat un-English approach to the writer's problem. He wanted to write everything from the most delicate poetic prose and cosmological musings to the lewd scrawl on the urinal wall and—horror of horrors to the British spinsterly mind—he is interested in the sex life of his characters to a microscopic extent that upsets the comfortably repressed. But there is also another aspect of his work disliked by critics here, which is his rather teutonic floridity of sentiment and language and his intense individualism does not

appeal to those good socialists who live by the constant clanking of ideological chains.

The Cosmological Eye gives a good and varied cross-section of Miller's work containing as it does critical essays, letters to surrealists everywhere, a scenario for a film which is perhaps the most interesting thing in the book, and excerpts from *Black Spring* suffering only from its obligatory cutting where the author says much more. At the end of the book there is an interesting autobiographical note, a kind of manifesto of his aims which will rub very much on the raw the political tinkers who want us to go on living in the same kind of hell only more so, who accept the world as it is and want to make it better. Miller wants something quite different, the disturbing reality of humanity, the music of life, and ultimately its silence. He rejects the 'civilization' forced on us by the power behind the existing governments of the world, and hopes they will be wiped out in a future perhaps nearer than we, or he thinks. In the conspiracy of mass hypnosis of our times Henry Miller will stand out finally as a man who was able to say in the face of every kind of difficulty and discouragement everything that passes in so many minds.

WREY GARDINER

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PETER YATES

CHATTO AND WINDUS

PREFACES (AND POEMS)

JOHN BAYLISS and DEREK STANFORD, *A Romantic Miscellany* (Fortune Press, 6s.); MICHAEL HAMBURGER, *Later Hogarth* (Cope & Fenwick, 1s.); *Unpublished Poems of Stephen Haggard* (Salamander Press, 6s.); LESLIE DAIKEN, *Signature of All Things* (Clock House Press, 5s.).

I have no way of knowing whether Mr. Bayliss' poems—making up half the *Romantic Miscellany*, the other half being provided by Mr. Stanford—were written before or after his book, *The White Knight*, which was reviewed here by me some eighteen months ago. He seems, however, especially in those poems where he has a definite story to tell or one person to address, to possess a greater awareness of what he is able to do as a poet. His verses still abound with archaisms and a certain forced boyishness:

('God gave me a voice. Vice would use it
to whisper young ladies to ruin. I cannot')

intended to impress by its reticence and simplicity, but now the theories which so overburdened the poems in the previous volume have been acclimatized to the polished style he uses, so that on occasion the means he employs make it of no consequence that they are the end. Thus, though the lines I have quoted above, or a stanza like:

'To make of corn a crown, of March a charm,
to keep back Summer and to hold the Spring
ever on finger-tip, is to pit the farm
full of queer traps to catch the wits in—'

appear to be either silly or no more than pretty little technical exercises, at least they have a soothing sound, and that may be the function Mr. Bayliss intended them to fulfil. The same smoothness can be found in most of his poems here, pleasingly in the best poem, 'Legend,' and in 'The Last Princess', less convincingly in 'Spring Poem Written in Winter', 'Bomber Pilot', 'Departure', and such lines as:

'and lust shall lose you your lustre of hair'; 'sweets eaten at
fairs under glare of gas/flaring in fog . . .'

—which do not make it too hard to answer his question, 'who can guess which gold is and which trash?'

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Readers of this magazine will know Mr. Derek Stanford for a witty, benevolent and knowledgeable critic. The preface to this book, which contains the first selection of his verse, includes a statement of his on what in his opinion are Romantic poets: those *'who seek behind authority for a personal law that should serve them as home; poets who gainsay the spoken word, the "herd" testament of the common hour; poets who record the age at its turn'*. It is difficult to see why this definition could not equally well be applied to almost any 'kind' of poet—Surrealist? Symbolist? Georgian?—but, be that as it may, in practice, i.e. in Mr. Stanford's poems, the 'recording of the age at its turn' frequently results in a loose stringing together of what he calls 'show-case words', thereby confirming the reader's suspicion that the definition was not very carefully considered either, before it was written:

*'Now, when the Springtide haunts the waste-land night
with unrequited words, and all past time
wanders in drugged somnambulist sleep
beyond the skyline's blighted wood of thorns . . .
now, when the future is an iron door
desire must batter,
body stands alone
and weeps black tears within its brittle shell,
while spirit poises, bound for its blue Nirvana.'*

Again, because of his liking for outworn poetic fashions, from which he does not escape by only rarely casting his poems in a definite form, for ponderous poetic language (*Æons of time, chasm of unbirth, vertigo of bliss, miraculous, galaxies, fathomless, nadir, capricious, incandescent*), and for preciousness (*'the seven stars signal all night to the forget-me-nots,' 'winds that betokened daffodils/ gave signal to the waiting snowdrop'*), much of his poetry has an air of breathless wordiness apt to descend into bathos. An instance of this may be found in his 'Poem for the Night of the First of Spring', where, having decided that his hectic night must be brought to an end, he does it thus:

*'Yet night must end and separation take
the stars in philtre from the pierrot blood.
I stood to watch the disappearing tram.
. . . but even now I hear the fountains play.'*

Later Hogarth is a pleasant if pedestrian sequence of poems, remarkable chiefly for the 'Biographical Portrait' of Mr. Hamburger

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which precedes it and which is meant, I suppose, to prove that he is a writer of some importance (as if his Hölderlin book had not done that): the gentleman who wrote this, the most astounding piece of nonsense I have ever had to read for review, has not even bothered to find out that 'Holderline' is not spelled that way.

Seven hitherto unpublished poems of the late Stephen Haggard and his good translation of a famous Hofmannsthal ballad are printed, in a beautifully produced book, together with a lengthy introduction by Christopher Hassall. At the time of his early death Haggard had only just begun to write poetry with any degree of seriousness; that fact, combined with the shrewd knowledge of his own limitations as an actor and a writer which he displayed in 'I'll Go To Bed at Noon' and 'The Craft of Comedy', indicates that he too would probably have been embarrassed by the excessive importance Mr. Hassall attaches to his unpretentious experiments.

Mr. Daiken's verse is likeable as Hyde Park oratory is likeable, especially when he does not overexcite himself and holler about 'oireland' and brothers-and-comrades. '*Oh, poet, prune your dreams*', he writes: a more critical selection might have reduced his book from seventy-odd to about twenty pages, but then, instead of a dangling, gawky youth shouting the same old mock-Yeatsian names and '*What have YOU done for the people?*' the promise of his better poems would have been more clearly evident.

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